



TOM O'HALLERAN

1ST DISTRICT, ARIZONA

March 17, 2020

Rear Admiral Michael D. Weahkee
Principal Deputy Director
Indian Health Service
Mail Stop: 08E53
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD. 20857

Dear Admiral Weahkee,

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to ensure that Tribal Nations have the necessary resources to respond to the current public health crisis. As you know, Tribal Nations are working tirelessly to prepare for increased transmission of the coronavirus (COVID-19). It is imperative that they have an open, direct line of communication with the necessary officials at the Indian Health Service (IHS) and receive timely guidance on IHS's response efforts. I am concerned that tribal leaders and health officials are neither receiving adequate guidance from IHS, nor the resources that they need in a timely manner.

Additionally, the IHS must have the necessary resources to communicate with tribal leaders across the country, as well as the medical and educational resources to manage the crisis. To that end, I request answers to the following questions:

1. What is the agency doing to ensure that Tribes who are operating health care clinics and hospitals pursuant to Public Law 93-638 have the necessary supplies and resources amid a rapid increase in confirmed cases?
2. Similarly, does the agency have the necessary supplies and resources to treat patients in direct service clinics and hospitals?

I am particularly concerned that access to the Strategic National Stockpile for tribal health care providers may be insufficient. I understand that the IHS has indicated to some tribal leaders that supplies of essential equipment, including masks and sanitizers, are insufficient.

3. Does the agency intend to work with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response to ensure that tribal health care providers have access to the Strategic National Stockpile so they can safely treat patients?

I appreciate your commitment to the health of American Indian and Alaska Native communities, and I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom O'Halleran". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" and last name "O'Halleran" clearly legible.

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress